

AT for as moche as the norissinges of my resouns descenden now into thee, I trowe it were tyme to usen a litel strenger medicynes. Now understond heer, al were it so that the yiftes of fortunene werenat brutelne transitorie, what is ther in hem that may be thyn in any tyme, or elles that it nis foul, yif that it be considered and loked perfittly? Richesses, ben they precious by the nature of hemself, or elles by the nature of thee? What is most worth of richesses? Is it nat gold or might of money assembled? Certes, thilke gold and thilke moneye shyneth & yeveth betere renoun to hem that despenden it thanne to thilke folk that mokeren it; for avarice maketh a wey mokeres to ben hated, and largesse maketh folk cleer of renoun. for sin that swich thing as is transferred fram o man to another ne may nat dwellen with no man; certes, thanne is thilke moneye precious whan it is translated into other folk and stenteth to ben had, by usage of large yevinge of him that hath yeven it. And also: yif that al the moneye that is owerl in the worlde were gadered toward o man, it sholde maken alle other men to ben nedys as of that. And certes a voys al hool, that is to seyn, withoute amenusinge, fulfilleth togidere the hering of moche folk; but certes, youre richesses ne mowen nat passen into moche folke withoute amenusinge. And whan they ben apassed, nedes they maken hem pore that forgon the richesses.

STREITE and nedys clepe I this richesse, sin that many folk ne may nat han it al, ne al may it nat comen to o man withouten povertie of alle other folk! And the shyninge of gemmes, that I clepe precious stones, draweth it nat the eyen of folk to hemward, that is to seyn, for the beautee? But certes, yif ther were beautee or bountee in the shyninge of stones, thilke cleernesce is of the stones hemself, and nat of men; for whiche I wondre gretly that men mervailen on swiche thinges. for why, what thing is it, that yif it wanteth moeving and joynture of sowle and body, that by right mighte semen a fair creature to him that hath a sowle of resoun? for al be it so that gemmes drawen to hemself a litel of the laste beautee of the world, through the entente of hir creatour and through the distinccioun of hemself; yit, for as moche as they ben put under youre excellence, they ne han nat de-

served by no wey that yesholden mervailen on hem. And the beautee of feldes, delyteth it nat moche unto yow?

Boecce. Why sholde it nat delyten us, sin that it is a right fair porcoun of the right faire werke, that is to seyn, of this worlde? And right so ben we gladed somtyme of the face of the see whan it is cleer; and also mervailen we on the hevene and on the sterres, and on the sonne & on the mone.

APERTENETH, quod she, any of thilke thinges to thee? Why darst thou glorifyen thee in the shyninge wed and embelised by the springing floures of the first somer sesoun, or swel leth thy plente in the frutes of somer? Why art thou ravissed with ydel joyes? Why embracest thou straunge goodes as they weren thyne? fortune ne shal never maken that swiche thinges ben thyne, that nature of thinges hath maketh foreine fro thee. Sooth is that, withouten doute, the frutes of the erthe owen to ben to the norissinge of bestes. And yif thou wolt fulfill thy nede after that it suffyeth to nature, than is it no nede that thou seke after the superfluitee of fortune. for with ful fewe thinges and with ful litel thyng nature halt hir apayed; and yif thou wolt a choken the fulfillinge of nature with superfluitees, certes, thilke thinges that thou wolt thresten or pouren into nature shullen ben unjoyful to thee, or elles annoyous. Wlenest thou eek that it be a fair thing to shyne with dyverse clothinge? Of whiche clothinge yif the beautee be agreeable to loken upon, I wol mervailen on the nature of the matere of thilke clothes, or elles on the werkman that wroughte hem. But also a long route of meyne, maketh that a blisful man? The whiche servants, yif they ben vicious of condiciouns, it is a greet change and a distruccioun to the hous, & a greet enemy to the lord himself. And yif they ben goode men, how shal straunge or foreine goodnesse ben put in the noumbre of thy riches? So that, by alle these forside thinges, it is clearly yshewed, that never oon of thilke thinges that thou accountedest for thyne goodes nas nat thy good. In the whiche thinges, yif ther be no beautee to ben desyred, why sholdest thou ben sory yif thou lese hem, or why sholdest thou rejoysen thee to holden hem? for yif they ben faire of hir owne kinde, what aperteneth that to thee? for also wel sholden they han ben faire by hemself, though they weren departed fram alle thyn richesses. for why faire ne precious ne weren they nat, for that they comen among thy richesses; but, for they semeden faire and

precious, therfor thou haddest lever rekne hem amonges thy richesses.

But what desirest thou of fortune with so grette a noise, and with so grette a fare? I trowe thou seke to drive away nede with habundaunce of thinges; but certes, it torneth to you al in the contrarie, for why certes, it nedeth of ful manye helpinges to kepen the diversitee of precious ostelments. And sooth it is, that of manye thinges han they nede that many thinges han; and ayeinward, of litel nedeth hem that mesuren hir fille after the nede of kinde, and nat after the outrage of covetise. Is it thanne so, that ye men ne han no proper good yset in you, for which ye moten seken outward youre goodes in foreine and subgit thinges? So is thanne the condicioun of thinges torned upsodown, that a man, that is a devyne beest by merite of his resoun, thinketh that himself nis neither faire ne noble, but yif it be thorough possessioun of ostelments that ne han no sowles. And certes, al other thinges ben apayed of hir owne beautee; but ye men, that ben semblable to God by your resonable thought, desiren to aparailen your excellent kinde of the lowest thinges; ne ye understonden nat how greet a wrong ye don to your creatour. for he wolde that mankind were most worthy & noble of any otre erthely thinges; and ye threste adoun your dignitees benethe the lowest thinges. for yif that al the good of every thinge be more precious than is thilke thing whos that the good is: sin ye demen that the fouleste thinges ben youre goodes, thanne submitten ye and putten yourselfen under the fouleste thinges by your estimacioun; & certes, this tydeth nat withoute youre desertes. for certes, swiche is the condicioun of alle mankind, that only whan it hath knowinge of itselfe, than passeth it in noblesse alle other thinges; and whan it forleteth the knowinge of itselfe, than is it brought binethen alle beestes.

for why al other livinge beestes han of kinde to knowe nat hemself; but whan that men leten the knowinge of hemself, it cometh hem of vice. But how brodes sheweth the error and the folye of yow men, that wenen that any thing may ben aparaild with straunge aparailments! But for sothe that may nat ben doon. for yif a wight shyneth with thinges that ben put to him, as thus, if thilke thinges shynen with which a man is aparaild, certes, thilke thinges ben comended and preysed with which he is aparaild; but natheles, the thing that is covered and wrapped under that dwelleth in his filthe.

AND I denye that thilke thing be good that anyeth him that hath it. Gabbe I of this? Thou wolt seye Nay. Certes, richesses han annoyed ful ofte hem that han tho richesses; sin that every wikked shrewe, (and for his wikkednesse the more gredy after other folkes richesses, wherso ever it be in any place, be it gold or precious stones), weneth him only most worthy that hath hem. Thou thanne, that so bisy dredest now the swerd and now the spere, yif thou haddest entred in the path of this life a voide wayferinge man, than woldest thou singe bifrom the theef; as who seith, a pore man, that berth no riches on him by the weye, may boldely singe bifrom theves, for he hath nat wherof to ben robbed. O precious and right cleer is the blisfulnesse of mortal richesses, that, whan thou hast geten it, than hast thou lorn thy sikernes!

Metre V.
felix nimium prior etas.

LISFUL was the first age of men! They helden hem apayed with the metes that the trewe felde broughten forth. They ne distroyede nor deceived nat hemself without rage. They weren wont lightly to slaken hir hunger at even with acornes of oke. They ne coude nat medly the yifte of Bachus to the cleer hony; that is to seyn, they coude make no piment nor clarree; ne they coude nat medle the brighte fleeces of the contrie of Seriens with the venim of Tyrie; this is to seyn, they coude nat deyen whyte fleeces of Serien contrie with the blode of a maner shellefisshe that men finden in Tyrie, with whiche blood men deyen purpur. They slepen hoolsom slepes upon the gras, & dronken of the renninge wateres; and layen under the shadwes of the heye pynntrees. Ne no gest ne straunger ne carf yit the heye see with ores or with shippes; ne they ne hadde seyn yit none newestrondes, to leden marchaundyse into dyverse contrees. Tho weren the cruel clariouns ful hust and ful stille, ne blood yshad by egre hate ne hadde nat deyed yit armures. for wherto or which woodnesse of enemys wolde first moeven armes, whan they seyen cruel woundes, ne none medes be of blood yshad?

WOLDE that oure tymes sholde torne ayein to the olde maneres! But the anguissous love of havinge brenneth in folk more cruelly than the fyr of the mountaigne Ethna, that ay brenneth. Alas! what was he that first dalf up the gobetes or the weightes of gold covered under erthe, and the precious stones that